

REPORT OF THE HOUSE MANAGERS ON THE IMPEACHMENT OF W. W. BELKNAP, LATE SECRETARY OF WAR.

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AUGUST 2, 1876.—Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. LORD, on the part of the managers appointed by the House of Representatives to conduct the impeachment against William W. Belknap, late Secretary of War, submitted the following

REPORT:

*The managers on the part of the House to conduct the impeachment against William W. Belknap, late Secretary of War, respectfully report :*

That the defendant, William W. Belknap, has been acquitted on all the articles presented against him, less than two-thirds of the Senators present voting guilty. The final vote was sixty-two. Thirty-seven of the Senators voted "guilty;" twenty-three "not guilty," for want of jurisdiction; one "not guilty;" and one criticised a portion of the articles of impeachment, and stated that the offenses charged in other of the articles were not proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

The question of jurisdiction, raised by the plea of the defendant, was the first point presented to the Court of Impeachment. After a protracted and exhaustive argument, the court held that it had jurisdiction, notwithstanding the resignation of the defendant, and the managers proceeded to prove the offenses charged in the articles of impeachment; and after proving them so conclusively that only two Senators in any manner questioned the guilt of the defendant, the minority of the Senate refused to be governed by the deliberate judgment of the majority, that it had jurisdiction, and in the form and mode before referred to prevented the conviction of the defendant.

While exercising the power to vote "not guilty," it was practically asserted that there was no converse to the proposition, and therefore that Senators had no legal right to vote "guilty," however satisfied of the guilt of the accused.

Notwithstanding this result, the managers believe that great good will accrue from the impeachment and trial of the defendant. It has been settled thereby that persons who have held civil office under the United States are impeachable, and that the Senate has jurisdiction to try them, although years may elapse before the discovery of the offense or offenses subjecting them to impeachment. To such as are or may hereafter be among the civil officers of the United States, who have no higher plane of integrity than the rule that "honesty is the best policy"—and it is conceded they are comparatively few—this decision will be a constant warning that impeachable offenses, though not discov

ered for years, may result in impeachment, conviction, and public disgrace. To settle this principle, so vitally important in securing the rectitude of the class of officers referred to, is worth infinitely more than all the time, labor, and expense of the protracted trial closed by the verdict of yesterday.

The trial and its discussions have presented also to the public mind clearer views of official accountability, and developed the higher requirements of an advancing public sentiment.

All of which is respectfully submitted.